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The succesſe of former Parliaments.

THe conſtitution of our Engliſh Monarchy is by wiſe men eſteemed one of the beſt in Europe as well for the ſtrength and honour of the Prince, as the ſecurity and freedome of the People and the Baſis, on which both are founded, is the conveniencie of that great Councell, the Parliament. Without which neither can the Prince enjoy that honour and felicity, that *Philip de Comynes*, a forrainer, ſo much admires, where he delivers what advantages the Kings of England have by that repreſentative Body of their People by whoſe aſſiſtance in any action they can neither want means, or looſe reputation. Nor on the other ſide, can the People have any poſſibility of pleading their own rights and liberties, for in the interim between Parliaments, the People are too ſcattered and confuſed a body, to appeare in vindication of their proper intereſts; and by too long abſence of ſuch Aſſemblies they would looſe all. For (as *Iunius* obſerves) *Populus authoritatem ſuam tacitè non utendo amittit: ſic plerumque accidit ut quod omnes curare tenentur curat nemo, quod omnibus commiſſum eſt, nemo ſibi commendatum putet*: The People inſenſibly looſe their power for want of uſing it: for ſo it happens, that what all ſhould looke after, no man does; what is committed to all, no man thinks his own charge.

And in that interim it happens, that thoſe *Optimates Regni*, who under the Prince are entruſted with government, meaning Councellours, Judges, and other great Magiſtrates, either through feare, flatterie, or private corruption, doe often betray the Peoples rights to the Prince.

The ſtate of government ſtanding thus; If diſtempered times happen to be (as our Chronicles have ſhewed ſome) where by diſſention between Prince and People, the Kingdomes ruin hath been endangered, it doth not ſo much prove that the Engliſh Government is not the beſt, as that the beſt Government may be abuſed. For in every Monarchy, how limited ſoever, the Prince his perſon is inveſted with ſo much Majeſty, that it would ſeem a mockery in Sate, if there

were no considerable power entrusted into his hands; yea, so much is that, if he be bad or weak, he may endanger the ruin of the Kingdome; so necessary is it for all humane ordinances, how wise so ever, to leave somewhat to Chance, and to have alwaies need of recourse to God, for his assisting or curing providence.

And though the Kingdome of England, by vertue of the government thereof, will be as hardly brought into confusion, as any in Europe; yet there is no warrant against the possibility of it.

For it was ever heretofore seen, that our Parliaments were rather a strength and advantage to an honourable wise Prince, than Orthedy against a bad or weak one; or if we change the expression, they were rather an excellent diet, to preserve a good raign in strength, than Physick to cure a bad one; and therefore have bin as much loved by sound and healthy Princes, as loathed by them that were out of temper; the latter having thought them a depression of their Dignity: as the former have esteemed them an advantage to their strength. So that in such times only the true convenience of that great Counsell hath been perceived by England, and admir'd by forrain Authors: in the other times it was that those witty complaints have bin in fashion, (as Sir *Robert Cotton* speaks of a bad time) that Princes in Parliaments are lesse then they should be, and Subjects greater. But on the contrary, that they have been an advantage unto Kings, the constant *Series* of our History will shew: 1. By those great atchievments which they have enabled our wise Kings to make, who were most constant in calling them, and consenting to them. 2. That no one Prince was ever yet happy without the use of them.

It may therefore seem a Paradox, that any Prince should disaffect that which is so high an advantage to him, and a great wonder, that some Kings of England, not vicious in their dispositions, nor very shallow in their understandings, have so much kicked against Parliaments. And that such have been (before we shew what reasons may be of it) see the characters of some Princes, whose successe and fortunes are known to all that read the Histories, as they are delivered by *Polidore Virgil*, who in his sixteenth booke speaks thus of Henry the third: *Fuit ingenio miti, animo magis nobili quam magno, cultor religionis, adversus inopes liberalis.* He was of a gentle nature, a mind rather noble then great, a lover of Religion, and liberall to the poor.

In his eighteenth Book thus of Edward the second; *Fuit illi natura bona, ingenium mite, quem primâ juvenili ætate actum in levissima virâ inclinem, eundem in graviora malorum consuetudines & consilia adegerunt. Non deerant illi animi vires, si repudiatis malis suasoribus illa juste exercuisset.* He was of a good

good nature and mild disposition, who first by the errours and rashnesse of Youth, falling into small faults, was afterwards drawn into greater, by the society and counsels of wicked men, there was not wanting in him a strength of mind, if avoiding evill counsell, he could have made a just use of it.

And in his twentieth Book, thus of Richard the second; *Fuit in ille spiritus non vilis, quem conscientia improbitas, & vitiosa vertebat.* He was of a spirit not low or base, but such as was quite destroyed by the wickednesse and folly of unhappy Consociates.

A reason of this accident may be, that their soules, though not vicious, have not been so large, nor their affections so publike, as their great calling hath required; but being too much manicipated to private fancies, and unhappy Favourites, and long flattered in those affections under the specious name of firmnesse in Friendship, (not being told that the adequate object of a Prince his love should be the whole people, and that they who receive publike honour, should return a generall love and care) they have too much neglected the Kingdome, & grow afraid to looke their faces in so true a glasse as a Parliament, and flying the remedy, encrease the disease, till it come to that unhappy height, that rather then acknowledge any unjust action, they strive for an unjust power to give it countenance, and so by a long consequence become hardly reconcilable to a Parliamentary way.

Such Princes have beene a greater affliction to this Kingdom, than those who have been most wicked, and more incureable for these reasons. 1. They have not been so conscious to themselves of great crimes, and therefore not so apt to be sensible of what they have bin made to do by evill Councell; And therefore they are more prone to suspect the People as unkind to them, then themselves as faulty, and so the more hardly drawn to repent their Actions, or meet heartily with a Parliament. 2. The People looke with honour upon the Prince, and when they find but few personall vices in him, will hardly be brought to think, though themselves feel and suffer for it, that he is faulty; and therefore sometimes (which would hardly be believed, if experience had not shewed it) the People have bin so rash as that to maintain for the King an unjust Prerogative, which themselves understand not, they have to their own ruin, and the Kings too (as it hath after proved) differred that great Councell whom themselves have chosen, and by whom only they could be preserved in their just rights, untill too late, they have seen and repented their folly.

Such a differtion was too sadly seen at the breaking up of that Parliament of Edward the second, where his Favourites the two *Spencers* were banished, and

and the tragicall effects that followed, when the King found so great a party of the Clergy and Laytie, as enabled him to call home his banished Favourites, and proved fatall to so many Parliamentary Lords, as the like execution of Nobility had never before been seen in England (over whose graves the People afterwards wept when it was too late) and proceeded, fuelled in their revenge, then became the duty and allegiance of Subjects. It is therefore a great mis-fortune to England, and almost a certain calamity, when the distempers of government have been let grow so long, as that for their cure they must need a long Parliament. For there are no wayes, how just, how moderate soever they be, which that great Councell can take (if they go far enough to make the cure) but will provoke, either by the meanes, or the length of them, the Prince his impatience, or the Peoples inconstancy.

For the first; the Delinquents must needs be many and great, and those employed, and perchance highly favoured by him, besides the reflexion which is made upon his judgement by their sufferings, and that will be the reason of his impatience.

Another is, that many prerogatives which were not indeed inherent in the Crown, but so thought by the Prince, and by him and his bad Councell long abused, to the prejudice of the People, with some seeming advantage to him, (though well weighed they brought none) are then after a long sufferance called in question.

For the People are used to entrust kind Princes with many of their own priviledges and rights, and never call for them again till they have been extreamly abused. But at such a time to make all cleare after so long a reckoning (and those long reckonings in State being commonly fatall; for Parliaments have seldome been discontinued, but by such Princes whose government in the Interim have been very illegall) they usually question so much, as that the Prince thinkes himselfe hardly dealt withall, such a Prince as we spoke of, who not bad in himselfe, but long misled by wicked counsell, was not enough sensible of the injuries he had done.

The second obstacle that such Parliaments may find is the Peoples inconstancy; and what age is not full of such examples which before we name, let us consider whether there be any reason for it? This perchance may be one, that the People naturally are lovers of novelty. Long discontinued and reforming Parliaments seemes to carry the face of a change of government, and those things may then happen which do in the shift of Princes; that some people may for a while flatter themselves with new and strange hopes, that prove fruitrate, or else with quicker redresses of inconvenience, then the great concurrence of so many

many weighty businesse can possibly admit, how industrious soever that great Councell be, distracted with so great a variety; and the People after some time spent, grow weary again of what they before had so long wished to see. Besides, the People are more and more poisoned dayly by the discourses of the kindred, friends, and retainers to so many Delinquents, as must needs be at such a Parliament: who, though they be no considerable party in respect of the whole Common-wealth, yet ply their particular interests with more eagernesse than most do the publike. They subtilly perswade the People, that what ever the Parliament does against those Delinquents is aymed at the King's honour, and that he is wounded through their sides. And this opinion is somewhat furthred when the People see how many prerogatives of the Prince, (as wee said before) are after long enjoying called in question. So that by this meanes their inconstancy seemes to be grounded upon loyalty to the King, and they perchance with honest, but deceived hearts) grow wearie of the great Councell of the Land.

Another reason may be, that the Prince himselfe averse from such a Parliament, for the reasons aforesaid, can find power enough to retard their proceedings, and keepe off the cure of State so long, till the People tired with expectation of it, have by degrees forgot the sharpnesse of those diseases, which before required it.

By this meanes at last, accidentally a miracle hath been wrought after a long Parliament, which is, that the People have taken part with the great Delinquents against the Parliament, for no other reason, than because those Delinquents had done them more wrong than the Parliament could suddenly redresse. And so the multitude of those great Delinquents crimes have turned to their own advantage.

But in such reforming Parliaments, upon whom so much businesse lyes, not only the inconstancy of the People hath been seen in History, but the unstedfastnesse of the Representative Body it selfe: and the distractions of that Assembly, whilst they forsake each other under so great a burden, have let that burden fall dishonourably to the ground. The most unhappy instance in this case, was that Parliament of *Richard* the second, begun at Westminster, and adjourned to Shrewsbury, in the nineteenth year of his reigne; a Parliament that discharged their trust the worst of any that I read of; where there was as much need of constancy and magnanimity as ever was, to redresse those great distempers which were then grown upon the State; and as much mischiefe ensued by their default, both upon Prince and People, which might have been well prevented, and his happinesse wrought together with their own (in the judgement of best writers) if they had timely and constantly joyned together in maintaining

ing the true rights of Parliament, and resisting the Illegall desires of their seduced King. But being fatally distracted, the major part of Lords and Bishops, wrought upon by the King, and the House of Commons being too far prevailed with by *Rushy* the Speaker, and his Instruments, they utterly deserted the Common-wealth, and looking only upon the Kings present desire, assented to such things as made the Prerogative a thing boundlesse; that he himselfe (as the Story reports) was heard glorying to say, there was no true Monarch in Europe but himselfe. Vpon which the same bad councell which before had brought him out of love with Parliaments, brought him to as great an abuse of that power which he had now gotten over a Parliament. And then followed the blank-Charters, and other horrid extortions, besides the suffering of some Lords whom the people most loved, and shortly after, by a sad consequence, his own ruin. Nor do we read that any of those Lords who under the colour of Loyalty and Love, (as they called it) to his person, had trodden down the power and priviledge of a Parliament under his feet, had afterwards so much Loyalty to him, as to defend his Crown and person against an Vsurper, who without any resistance or Contradiction unjustly ascended the Royall Throne, the last occasion of that miserable and civill war, which in the following Ages so long afflicted the Kingdome of England. This was the worst example of any Parliament, but in other times, they have proved better physicke then any other earthly meanes could be; yet their greatest vertue and excellency is seen, when they have been used as a diet by honourable and just Princes, such as this Nation hath been sometimes blest with; and such who have thought it no disparagement or depression of their dignity, to be ruled by the sway of that great and honourable Councell, then a wise guider of a Ship would thinke it to follow his Compasse, or any Mathematician to be directed by his necessary rules and instruments.

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